

RAILROAD FROM LAKE MICHIGAN TO THE PACIFIC.

MEMORIAL

OF

ASA WHITNEY, OF NEW YORK CITY,

RELATIVE TO

The construction of a railroad from lake Michigan to the Pacific ocean.

JANUARY 28, 1845.

Read, and referred to the Committee on Roads and Canals.

To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled :

Your memorialist begs respectfully to represent to your honorable body, that by rivers, railroads, and canals, all the States east and north of the Potomac connect directly with the waters of the great lakes. That there is a chain of railroads in projection and being built from New York to the southern shores of lake Michigan, crossing all the veins of communication to the ocean, through all the States south and east of the Ohio river, producing commercial, political, and national results and benefits which must be seen and felt through all our vast confederacy.

Your memorialist would further represent to your honorable body, that he has devoted much time and attention to the subject of a railroad from lake Michigan, through the Rocky mountains, to the Pacific ocean ; and that he finds such a route practicable—the results from which would be incalculable, far beyond the imagination of man to estimate. To the interior of our vast and widely-spread country, it would be as the heart to the human body ; it would, when all completed, cross all the mighty rivers and streams which wend their way to the ocean through our vast and rich valleys from Oregon to Maine, a distance of more than three thousand miles.

The incalculable importance of such a chain of roads will readily be seen and appreciated by your honorable body. It would enable us, in the short space of eight days, and perhaps less, to concentrate all the forces of our vast country at any point from Maine to Oregon, in the interior, or on the coast. Such easy and rapid communication, with such facilities for exchanging the different products of the different parts, would bring all our immensely wide-spread population together as one vast city ; the moral and social effects of which must harmonize all together as one family, with but one interest—the general good of all.

Your memorialist respectfully represents further to your honorable body, that the roads from New York to lake Michigan (a distance of 840 miles) will no doubt be completed by the States through which they pass, or by individuals; that from lake Michigan to the mouth of the Columbia river is 2,160 miles, making from New York to the Pacific 3,000 miles, and can be performed in eight days; from the Columbia river to the Sandwich islands is 2,100 miles, making from New York to the Sandwich islands 5,100 miles; from the Columbia river to Japan is 5,600 miles, making from New York to Japan 8,600 miles; from Columbia river to Amoy, in China, (the port nearest to the tea and silk provinces,) is 6,200 miles, making from New York to Amoy only 9,200 miles; which, with a railroad to the Pacific, thence to China by steam, can be performed in 30 days; now being a sailing distance of nearly 17,000 miles, requiring from 100 to 150 days for its performance. Then the drills and sheetings of Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts, can be transported to China in 30 days; and the teas and rich silks of China, in exchange, come back to New Orleans, to Charleston, to Washington, to Baltimore, to Philadelphia, to New York, and to Boston, in 30 days more. Comment is unnecessary. Your honorable body will readily see the revolution by this to be wrought in the entire commerce of the world; and that this must inevitably be its channel, when the rich freights from the waters of the Mississippi and the Hudson will fill to overflowing with the products of all the earth the storehouses of New York and New Orleans, the great marts dividing the commerce of the world; while each State, and every town in our vast confederacy, would receive its just proportion of influence and benefits, compared with its vicinity to, or facility to communicate with, any of the rivers, canals, or railroads crossed by this great road.

Your memorialist would respectfully represent to your honorable body its political importance; that, affording a communication from Washington to the Columbia river in less than eight days, a naval depot, with a comparatively small navy, would command the Pacific, the South Atlantic, and Indian oceans, and the China seas.

Your memorialist begs respectfully to represent further to your honorable body, that he can see no way or means by which this great and important work can be accomplished for ages to come, except by a grant of a sufficient quantity of the public domain; and your memorialist believes, that, from the proceeds of such a grant, he will be enabled to complete said road in a reasonable time, and at the same time settle the country through which it passes, so far as the lands may be found suited to cultivation, with an industrious and frugal people; and thus, in a comparatively short space of time, accomplish what will otherwise require ages, and thus at once giving us the power of dictation to those who will not long remain satisfied without an attempt to dictate to us. Our system of free government works so well, diffusing so much intelligence, dispensing equal justice, and securing safety to all, and producing so much general comfort and prosperity, that its influence must, like a mighty flood, sweep away all other systems. Then let us not flatter ourselves that this overwhelming current is not to meet resistance; for to us directly will that resistance be applied, and your memorialist believes that we must yet meet that desperate and final struggle which shall perpetuate our system, and religious and civil liberty.

Your honorable body are aware of the over-population of Europe; and your memorialist would respectfully represent, that by the application of

machinery, and its substitution for manual labor, the latter no longer receives its just or sufficient reward, and thousands in the fear of starvation at home are driven to our shores, hoping from our wide-spread and fertile soil to find a rich reward for their labor. Most of them ignorant, and all inexperienced, having been herded together in large numbers at home, they dread separation—they fear the wilderness or prairie—refuse to separate from their associates, or to leave the city; their small means soon exhausted, they see abundance around them, almost without price, but that small price they can no longer pay; necessity plunges them into vice, and often crime, and they become burdensome to our citizens, and which evil is increasing to an alarming extent; and your memorialist believes it must increase, unless there can be some great and important point in our interior to which they can be attracted immediately on their landing; where their little means, with their labor, can purchase lands; where they will escape the tempting vices of our cities, and where they will have a home with their associates, and where their labor from their own soil will not only produce their daily bread, but, in time, an affluence of which they could never have dreamed in their native land.

Your memorialist believes that this road will be the great and desirable point of attraction; that it will relieve our cities from a vast amount of misery, crime, and taxation; that it will take the poor unfortunates to a land where they will be compelled to labor for a subsistence; and as they will soon find that their labor and efforts receive a just and sufficient reward—finding themselves and their little ones surrounded with comfort and plenty, the recompense for their own toil—their energies will kindle into a flame of ambition and desire, and we shall be enabled to educate them to our system, to industry, prosperity, and virtue. Your memorialist confidently expects all this, and more.

Your memorialist would further respectfully represent to your honorable body, that from an estimate (as near accurate as can be made, short of an actual survey) the cost of said road, to be built in a safe, good, and substantial manner, will be about \$50,000,000; and as the road cannot (from the situation of the uninhabited country through which it will pass) earn anything, or but little, before its completion, therefore a further sum will be required to keep it in operation, repair, &c., of \$15,000,000; making the total estimated cost of said road, when completed, \$65,000,000. It may require some years before the earnings of said road (at the low rate of tolls necessary for its complete success) can be much, if anything, beyond its current expenses for repairs, &c.; but after a period of ——— years, and at the very lowest possible rate of tolls, it must earn more than ample for its repairs and expenses. It would be the only channel for the commerce of all the western coast of Mexico and South America, of the Sandwich islands, of Japan, of all China, Manilla, Australia, Java, Singapore, Calcutta, and Bombay. Not only all ours, but the commerce of all Europe, to the most of those places, must pass this road. Your memorialist says *must*; because the saving of time (so all important to the merchant) from the long and hazardous voyage around either of the capes, would force it; and in a few years would be built up cities, towns, and villages, from the lake to the ocean, which would alone support the road. Being built from the public lands, the road should be free, except so far as sufficient for the necessary expenses of operation, repairs, &c.; and your memorialist believes that, at a very low rate of tolls, a sum would be gained sufficient, after all current expenses, to

make a handsome distribution for public education; and as a part of the earnings of said road will be from foreign commerce, your memorialist begs to respectfully submit the subject to your wise consideration.

Your memorialist respectfully further represents to your honorable body, that, from the knowledge he can procure of them, he finds that the lands for a long distance east of the mountains are bad—of little or no value for culture; that through, and for some distance beyond the mountains, would also be of but very little, if any, value; therefore your memorialist is satisfied that it will require an entire tract of 60 miles in width, from as near to lake Michigan as the unappropriated lands commence, to the Pacific ocean. Therefore, in view of all the important considerations here set forth, your memorialist is induced to pray that your honorable body will grant to himself, his heirs, and assigns, such tract of land, the proceeds of which to be strictly and faithfully applied to the building and completing the said road—always with such checks and guarantees to your honorable body as shall secure a faithful performance of all the obligations and duties of your memorialist; and that after the faithful completion of this great work, should any lands remain unsold, or any moneys due for lands, or any balance of moneys received for lands sold, and which have not been required for the building of the said road, then all and every of them shall belong to your memorialist, his heirs, and assigns, forever.

Your memorialist further prays that your honorable body will order a survey of said route, to commence at some point to be fixed upon as most desirable on the shore of lake Michigan, between the 42d and 45th degree of north latitude; thence west to the gap or pass in the mountains; and thence by the most practicable route to the Pacific ocean.

Your memorialist would respectfully represent one further consideration to your honorable body: that, in his opinion, Oregon must fast fill up with an industrious, enterprising people from our States; that they will soon attract and draw to them large numbers from the states of Europe, all expecting to share in the benefits of our free government, claiming its care and protection. But the difficulty of access to them, either by land or water, will forbid such a hope; and your memorialist believes that the time is not far distant when Oregon will become a State of such magnitude and importance, as to compel the establishment of a separate government—a separate nation—which will have cities, ports, and harbors, all free—inviting all the nations of the earth to a free trade with them; when they will control and monopolize the valuable fisheries of the Pacific; control the coast trade of Mexico and South America, of the Sandwich islands, Japan, and China; and be our most dangerous and successful rival in the commerce of the world. But your memorialist believes that this road will unite them to us; enabling them to receive the protecting care of our government; sharing in its blessings, benefits, and prosperity, and imparting to us our share of the great benefits from their local position, enterprise, and industry. But your honorable body will see all this, and more.

And, as in duty bound, will every pray

ASA WHITNEY.

JANUARY 28, 1845.